

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 20-37 were previously pending in the present application. The Examiner has allowed claim 37, rejected claims 20-23, 26-29 and 31-35, and objected to claims 24, 25, 30 and 36. Applicant herein amends claims 20 and 28, cancels claims 24 and 30, and submits new claims 38-49. Applicant respectfully requests consideration of pending claims 20-23, 25-29 and 31-49, in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

I. Allowable Subject Matter: 24, 25, 30 and 36-37

Claim 37 stands allowed.

The Examiner has objected to claims 24, 25, 30 and 36 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but states that claims 24, 25, 30 and 36 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly:

- Applicant has canceled claim 24, and amended independent claim 20 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 24. Thus, Applicant submits that independent claim 20 is in condition for allowance (there are no intervening claims).
- Applicant has canceled claim 30, and amended independent claim 28 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 30. Thus, Applicant submits

that claim 28 is in condition for allowance (there are no intervening claims).

- Applicant submits new independent claim 38, which combines the subject matter of claims 20 and 25 (there are no intervening claims).

Thus Applicant submits that independent claim 38 is in condition for allowance.

- Applicant submits new independent claim 44, which combines the subject matter of claims 28 and 36, as well as intervening claim 35.

Thus, Applicant submits that independent claim 44 is in condition for allowance.

II. Rejection of Claims 20-23, 26-29 and 31-35

The Examiner has rejected claims 20-23, 26-29 and 31-35 as being unpatentable over the cited prior art. Applicant respectfully disagrees. However, in the interest of hastening allowance of the present application, Applicant has amended independent claims 20 and 28 in the manner the Examiner states would be allowable. Applicant reserves the right to prosecute the subject matter of former claims 20 and 28, e.g., in a continuation patent application.

In view of the foregoing amendments, Applicant submits that the Examiner's rejection of independent claims 20 and 28 is obviated. Further, claims 21-23, 25-27, 29 and 31-36, being dependent upon respective allowable

base claims, are themselves allowable over the cited art for at least the foregoing reasons provided with respect to claims 20 and 28.

III. New Claims 38-49: No Further Search Required

As stated above, Applicant is submitting new independent claims 38 and 44, respectively based upon the allowable combinations of existing claims 20/25 and 28/35/36. Independent claims 38 and 44 are in condition for allowance and do not present subject matter requiring new consideration or search.

Further, new dependent claims 39-43 track existing dependent claims 21-23 and 26-27; and new dependent claims 45-49 track existing dependent claims 29 and 31-34. Thus, dependent claims 39-43 and 45-49 do not present subject matter requiring new consideration or search. Dependent claims 39-43 and 45-49, being dependent upon allowable base claims 38 and 44, are also in condition for allowance.

V. Conclusion

Applicant submits that pending claims 20-23, 25-29 and 31-49 are in condition for allowance, and no rejections or objections remain in the present application. Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

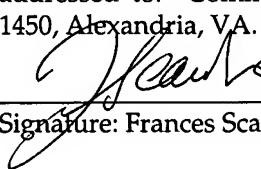
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February 27, 2006

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